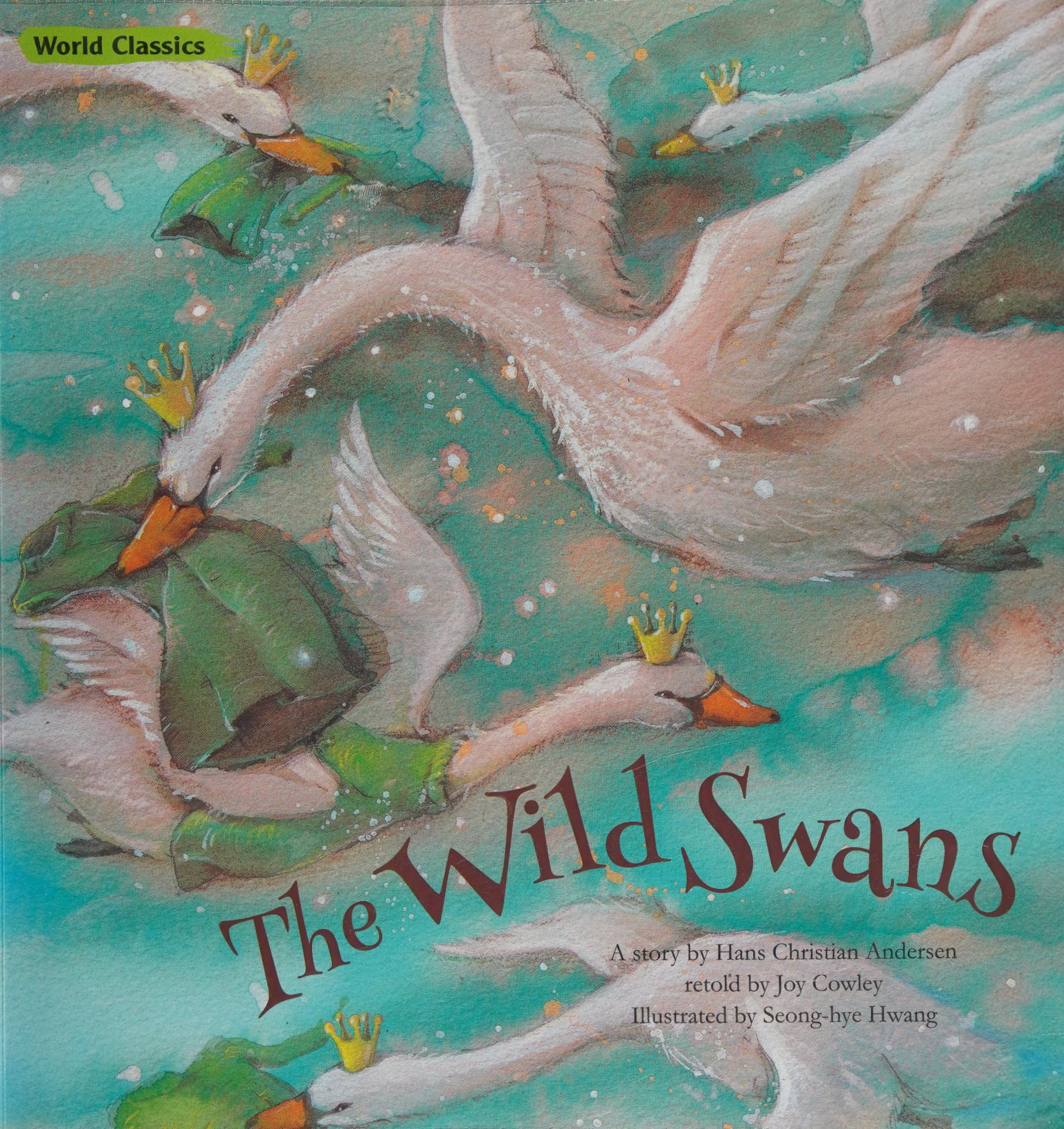
World Classics
The Wild Swans
A story by Hans Christian Andersen
retold by Joy Cowley
Illustrated by Seong-hye Hwang

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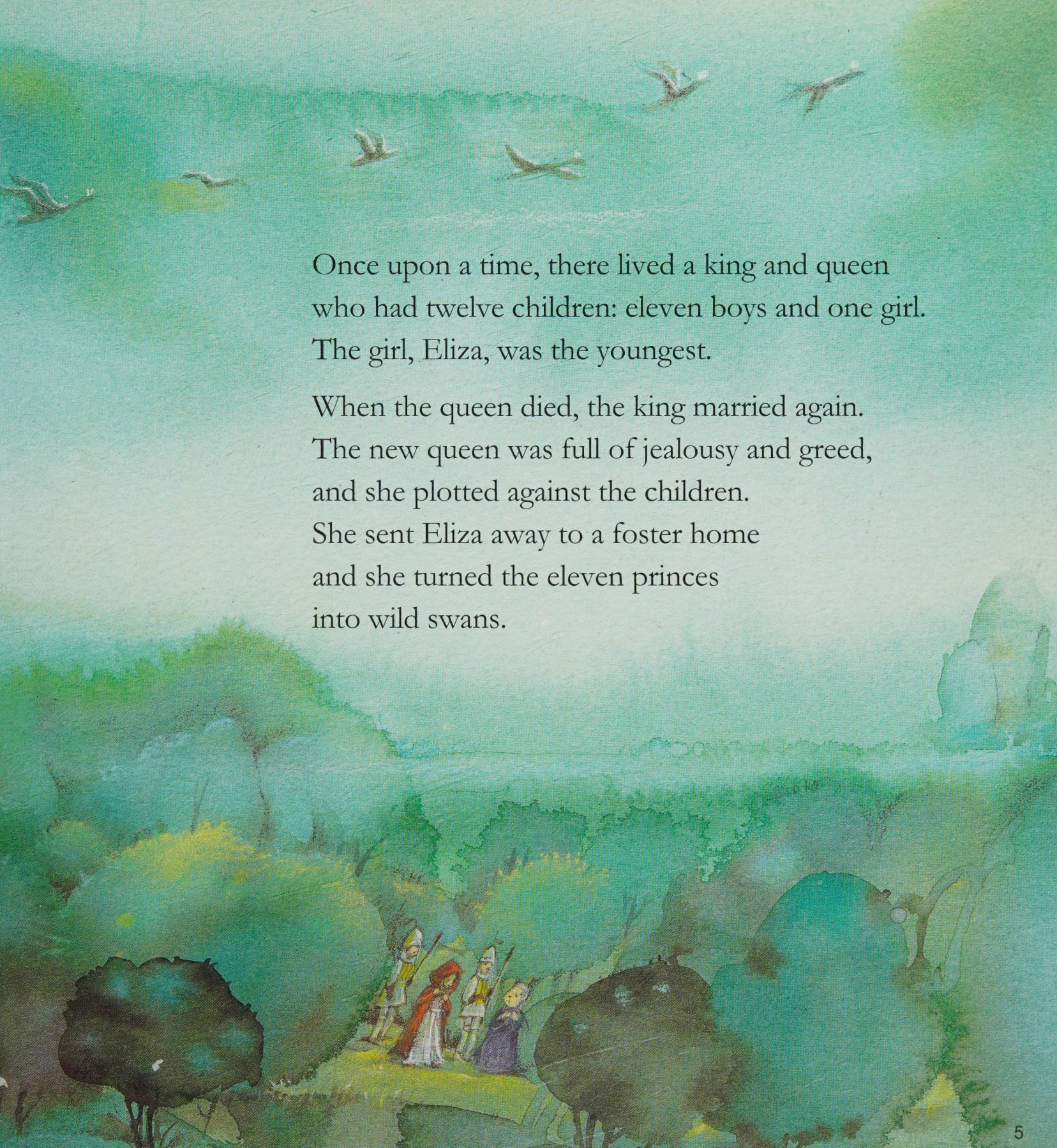


Once upon a time, there lived a king and queen
who had twelve children: eleven boys and one girl.
The girl, Eliza, was the youngest.

When the queen died, the king married again.
The new queen was full of jealousy and greed,
and she plotted against the children.
She sent Eliza away to a foster home
and she turned the eleven princes
into wild swans.

When Eliza was fifteen, she returned to the palace.
The queen was so jealous that she decided
to put a curse on her beautiful stepdaughter.
She put three magic turtles in the bathwater
so that Eliza would turn into a turtle.
But Eliza's heart was so pure
that the queen's curse did not work.
Instead, the three magic turtles
turned into beautiful flowers.

The queen was very angry.
She put a much stronger curse
on the lotion Eliza put on her face.
This time the curse worked.
Eliza's face became so ugly
that no one recognised her.

Poor Eliza! She left the palace
and went on a long journey
to find her eleven brothers.

In a forest, Eliza washed her face
in a beautiful spring.
To her delight, her own face came back.
The water had washed away the curse.

A wise old woman came by,
and Eliza asked her,
"Have you seen eleven princes?"

"No," said the old woman.
"But I saw eleven swans.
They were wearing gold crowns.
They flew down to a little lake,
yesterday at sunset."

Eliza found the lake and waited.
The eleven swans flew down,
and when the sun set,
they turned into humans.
They were her eleven brothers.
How surprised they were to see Eliza!
There were many tears and hugs.

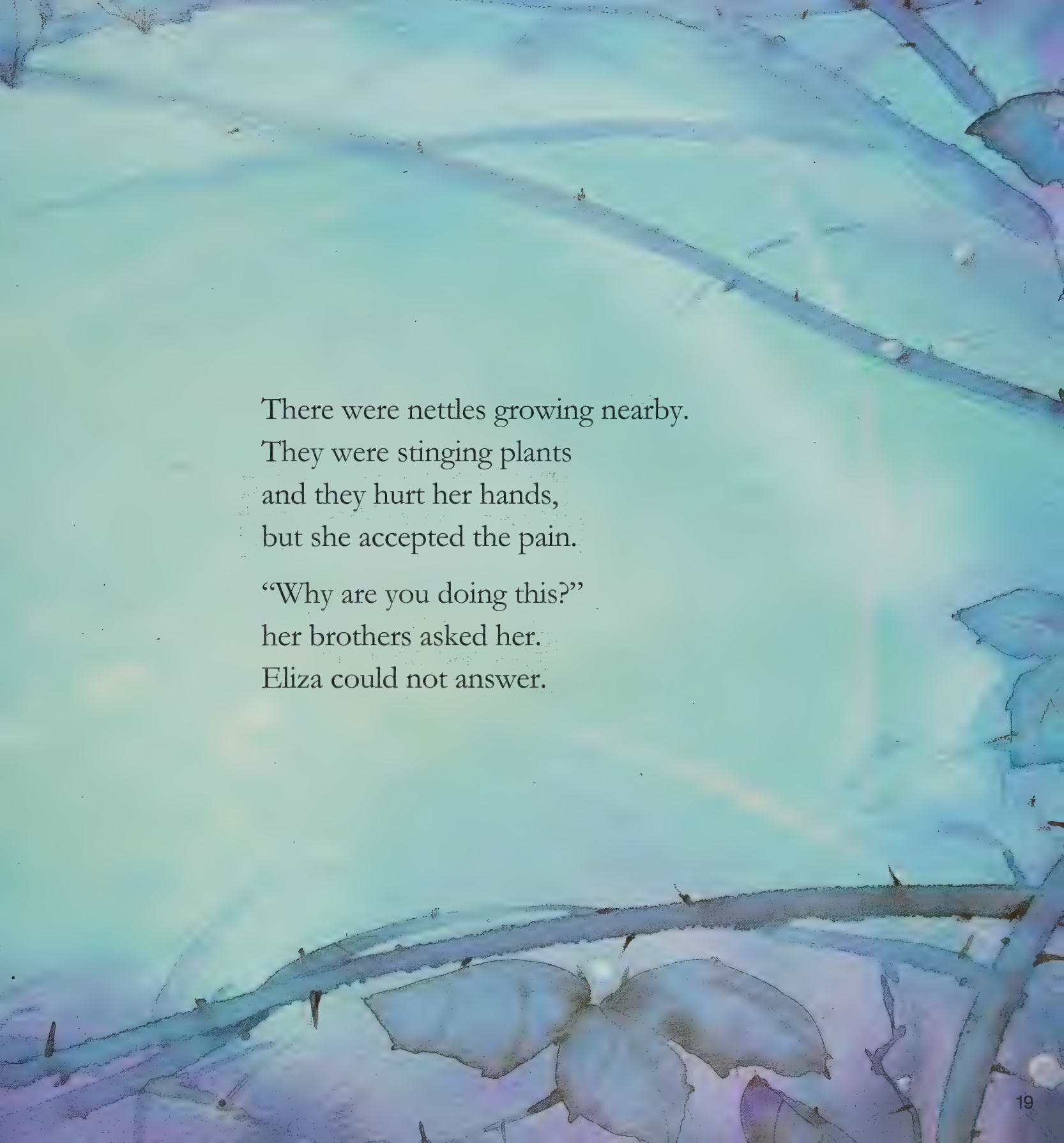
The brothers said they would become swans again
when the sun came up in the morning.
"We have to fly away, but this time, Eliza,
we will take you with us," they said.
That night, the brothers made a net
with willow branches and reeds.

When the sun rose,
the brothers turned into swans.
They sat Eliza in the net
and flew away with her.

Eliza and her brothers
went from place to place.
The brothers looked after her
as swans during the day
and as men during the night.

The brothers flew with Eliza
to a distant country,
and they made their home
in a deep forest cave.

One night, Eliza saw in her dreams
the wise old woman from the forest spring.
"Eliza," the old woman said, "you can help
your brothers to escape the queen's spell.
Weave eleven shirts from nettles.
When your brothers put the shirts on,
the spell will be broken.
But do not tell your brothers
why you are making these shirts."



There were nettles growing nearby.
They were stinging plants
and they hurt her hands,
but she accepted the pain.

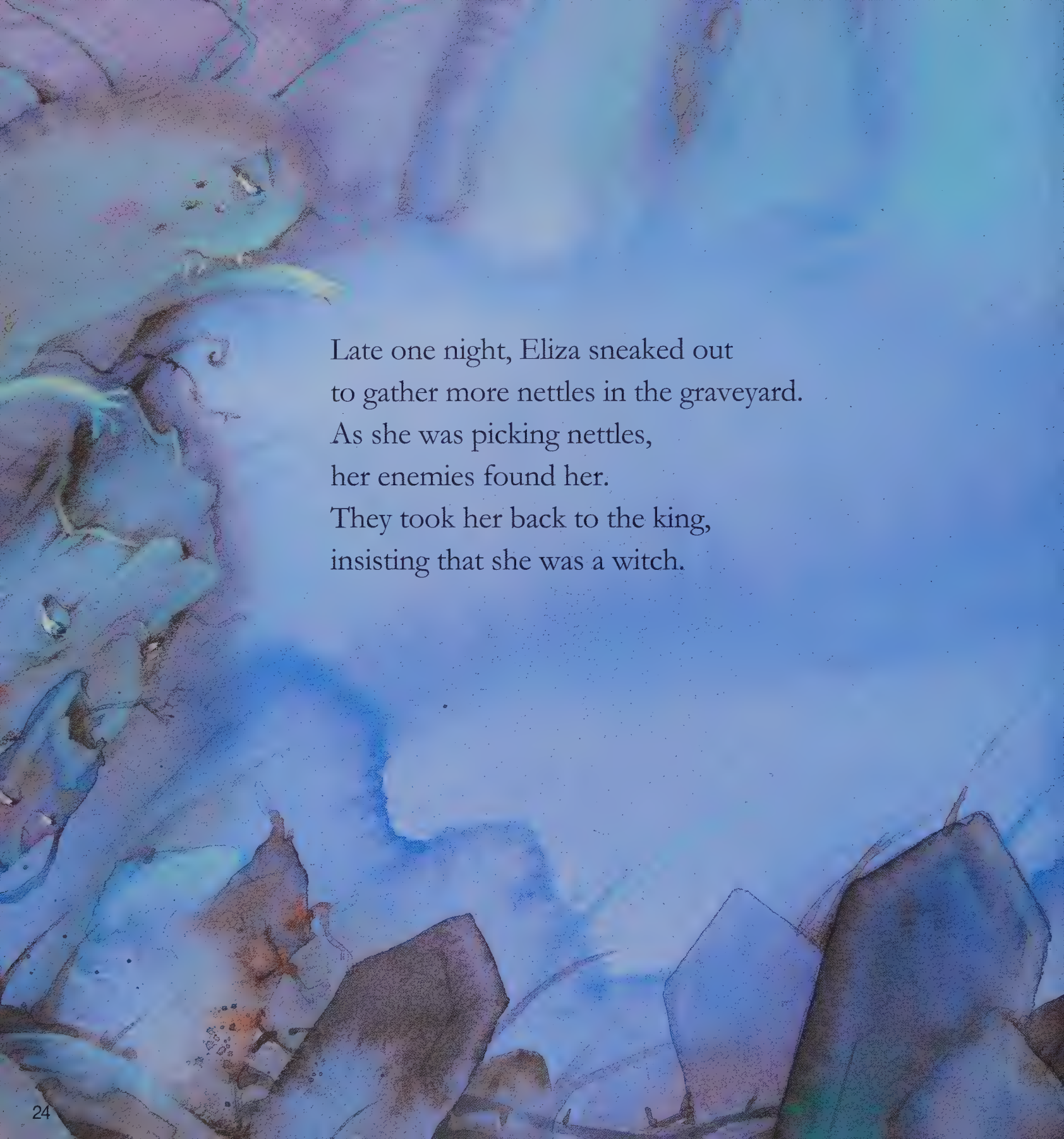
"Why are you doing this?"
her brothers asked her.
Eliza could not answer.

Eliza was sitting in the cave,
making her brothers' shirts
when a royal huntsman came in.
"I will present you to my king,"
the huntsman told Eliza.

Eliza refused, but the king's huntsman
forced her to go to the palace.
She took her nettles with her
and continued to make the shirts.

The king fell in love with Eliza
and made her his queen.
But she never forgot her brothers,
and every spare moment she had,
she made shirts from nettles.

But there were enemies in the palace,
who said that Eliza was a witch
and needed to be killed.

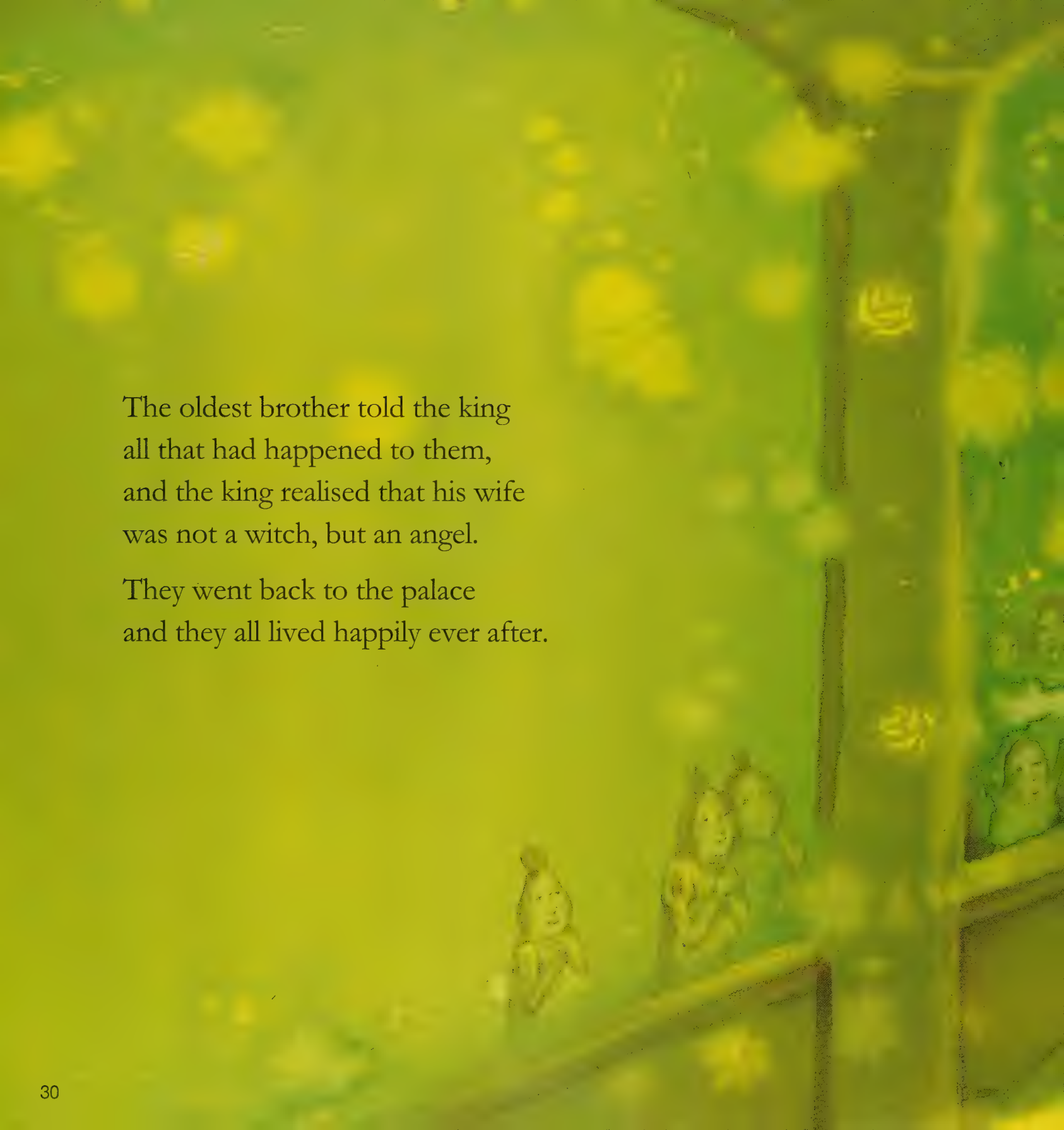


Late one night, Eliza sneaked out
to gather more nettles in the graveyard.
As she was picking nettles,
her enemies found her.
They took her back to the king,
insisting that she was a witch.

The king was very angry.
Believing that his wife was a witch,
he sentenced her to die the next day.

Eliza did not stop her work.
Even when she was in the wagon
on the way to her execution,
she worked on the last nettle shirt.

When Eliza was forced out of the wagon,
she saw eleven swans flying over her.
She threw them the eleven shirts,
and when the eleven swans put them on,
they became fully human again.



The oldest brother told the king
all that had happened to them,
and the king realised that his wife
was not a witch, but an angel.

They went back to the palace
and they all lived happily ever after.

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